

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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P 201338Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6261
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 3600

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS, PINT
SUBJECT: ISRAELI PRESS REACTION TO THE ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: THREE DAYS AFTER THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ISRAELI COMMENTATORS AND EDITORIALISTS ARE WELL INTO DIGESTING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISRAEL'S SECOND "EARTHQUAKE." COMMENTS CENTER ON THE GENERAL THEMES OF LABOR'S DEFEAT, ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND CAUSES; THE PROSPECTS FOR U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS AND THE PEACE PROCESS; AND THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE (DMC) AND ITS "DILEMMA" WHETHER OR NOT TO ENTER A LIKUD-LED COALITION. END SUMMARY

1. POLITICAL ANALYST YOSEF GOELL, IN SEVERAL ARTICLES FOR THE JERUSALEM POST, DISSECTS THE LABOR DEFEAT. HE NOTES, AS HAVE NUMEROUS OTHERS, THAT LIKUD DID NOT WIN THE ELECTIONS SO MUCH AS LABOR LOST THEM. HE OBSERVES THAT LIKUD ADDED ONLY A FEW SEATS TO ITS TOTAL FOR THE WAST ELECTION AND THAT MANY FORMER LABOR
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PARTY VOTERS DEFECTED TO THE DMC OR ELSEWHERE. GOELL AND DAVAR'S HANNAH ZEMER AGREE THAT THE CAUSES WHICH UNDERLAY LABOR'S FALL INCLUDED INTERNAL FRICTION AMONG THE PARTY LEADERS, DIZZIYING INFLATION, DETERIORATION IN LABOR RELATIONS, EXPOSES OF CORRUPTION, OMINOUS SHADOWS CAST ON THE DEFENSE MINISTRY BY THE STATE CONTROLLER'S REPORT, AND FREQUENT SURPRISES

AND CLARIFICATIONS FROM WASHINGTON. GOELL ALSO PARTICULARLY CITED THE ALIENATION OF LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP FROM ITS TRADITIONAL BASES OF SUPPORT. HE POINTED OUT THAT LABOR LOST VOTES IN ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY, INCLUDING THE POOR, THE MIDDLE CLASS, AND THE WELL TO DO; IN THE BIG CITIES AS WELL AS IN THE DEVELOPMENT TOWNS, AND EVEN AMONG THE TRADITIONAL LABOR BASTIONS OF MOSHAVIM AND KIBBUTZIM. LABOR'S DECLINE, ACCORDING TO GOELL, COULD CONTINUE IN THE JUNE 21 HISTADRUT ELECTIONS, AND THE PRESENT DISAFFECTION WITH THE LABOR PARTY AMONG HISTADRUT MEMBERS COULD FURTHER INCREASE UNDER A LIKUD-LED GOVERNMENT WHICH MIGHT NATIONALIZE HEALTH SERVICES, THEREBY ELIMINATING THE "KUPAT HOLIM" SICK FUNDS--A MAJOR INCENTIVE FOR HISTADRUT MEMBERSHIP. BOTH ZIMER AND GOELL CONCLUDE THAT LABOR DESERVED ITS DEFEAT AND CANNOT CONSIDER JOINING A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. LABOR SHOULD ASSUME THE ROLE OF CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION AND REHABILITATE ITSELF.

2. THE ROAD THEMES OF FOREIGN POLICY, PROSPECTS FOR U.S./ISRAELI RELATIONS AND THE PEACE PROCESS ARE WIDELY DISCUSSED. HAARETZ'S GIDEON SAMET DOES NOT INTERPRET THE ELECTION RESULTS AS PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR LIKUD FOREIGN POLICY AND NOTES THAT IN SPITE OF THE STUNNING ELECTION RESULTS, THE CENTER (ALIGNMENT AND DMC) AND THE RIGHT (LIKUD AND RELIGIOUS PARTIES) HAVE NOT GREATLY ALTERED THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN THEM. THUS, THE ELECTION REVERSAL UNCLASSIFIED

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IS NOT A MANDATE FOR POLITICAL RIGIDITY, BUT A RENUNCIATION OF ALIGNMENT RULE AND AN EXPRESSION OF A CRAVING FOR A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP. DESPITE HIS ANALYSIS, SAMET OBSERVES RUEFULLY THAT THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE THE ELECTION RESULTS WILL IN FACT BE SEEN IN THIS LIGHT. UNLESS THE LIKUD POSITIONS VIS-A-VIS THE ARABS ARE SOFTENED THROUGH THE MECHANISM OF THEIR ASSUMING POWER, THE RECENT ELECTIONS WILL NOT ONLY HAVE BEEN THE MOST DRAMATIC, BUT ALSO THE MOST CATASTROPHIC.

3. YEDIOT AHARONOT'S EROL GUINEY THINKS IT ALREADY OBVIOUS THAT THE LIKUD TRIUMPH WILL INTENSIFY ISRAEL'S ISOLATION, NOTABLY IN EUROPE WHERE THE LIKUD, UNLIKE THE LABOR PARTY, HAS NO SPECIAL RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN PARTIES. THE NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM WILL BE FINDING A COMMON LANGUAGE WITH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. GUINEY WONDERS WHETHER CONGRESS WILL BE HELPFUL TO

A LIKUD GOVERNMENT IF THERE ARE TOURBLES BETWEEN THE
U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND ISRAEL, AND HE LOOKS FOR VERY
DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD.

4. MAARIV'S SHAUL BEN HAIM BELIEVES THAT WITH THE
LIKUD VICTORY, PEACE DISCUSSIONS ARE NOW RIGHT BACK
WHERE THEY STARTED, WHICH IS A DISTINCT ADVANTAGE
FOR ISRAEL--NOW THE REALDIALOGUE CAN BEGIN. THE
AMERICANS AND THE ARABS BOTH REALIZE THAT THE CHANGES
IN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE IGNORED AND MUST
BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. LOOKING FORWARD TO MENAHEM
BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON, BENHAIM SUGGESTS THAT
IT WOULD NOT BE LOGICAL FOR THE NEW PRIME MINISTER TO
USE ELECTION CAMPAIGN FORMULAS OR AN OPPOSITION PARTY
PLATFORM AS THE ASIS FOR HIS TALKS WITH THE AMERICAN
PRESIDENT. IN PARTICULAR, BEGIN CAN HARDLY STAND IN
FRONT OF CARTER WITH A LINE OF NO COMPROMISE ON JUDEA
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AND SAMARIA. RATHER THAN A FRONTAL CONFRONTATION,
BEGIN MIGHT STRESS HIS DECISION TO CONTINUE THE PEACE
DIALOGUE BY CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE CONVENING OF A

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GENEVA PREPARATORY COMMITTEE. AT GENEVA, THE AMERICANS WOULD REVERT TO THE CORRECT STATUS OF "TRUSTED MEDIATOR," WITH THE EMPHASIS ON THE SECOND WORD. BEGIN MIGHT ALSO SUBMIT A COMPREHENSIVE ISRAELI PROGRAM, BUT HE SHOULD VOID ATTEMPTING TO STIMULATE A COMMON ISRAELI-U.S. INTEREST IN COMBATING COMMUNISM, FOR IT IS HIGHLY DOUBTFUL THAT THIS IS WHERE A COMMON INTEREST IS BEST FOUND.

5. RELATIVELY FEW COMMENTATORS HAVE ARGUED FOR A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, BUT MAARIV'S MOSHE ZAK IS ONE. HE SUPPORTS THIS IDEA BECAUSE THE ELECTION RESULTS, WHICH HAVE FOLLOWED UPON A SERIES OF INTERNAL UPHEAVALS IN ISRAEL, HAVE NOT ONLY WEAKENED ISRAEL'S STRENGTH BUT ALSO HER POLITICAL BARGAINING POWER. ZAK CONCLUDES FROM THE ELECTION RESULTS THAT THE AMERICANS MUST REFER TO THE KISSINGER METHOD OF INTERIM AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE ARABS AND THE ISRAELIS IN LIGHT OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S LIKELY UNCLASSIFIED

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PROFILE ON THE ISSUE OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA.

6. MANY COMMENTATORS FOCUS ON THE QUESTION FACING THE DMC: WHETHER IT SHOULD OINT A LIKUD-LED COALITION. HAARETZ AND MAARIV ARGUE THAT THE DMC VOTERS ARE ENTITLED TO AT LEAST PARTIAL SATISFACTION OF THEIR REFORM HOPES THROUGH DMC PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT AL HAMISHMAR DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR THE DMC TO COMPROMISE ITS "SEVEN PRINCIPLES" WITH A BEGIN GOVERNMENT. THE POST'S GOELL FINDS THAT THE DMC AND LIKUD COULD WORK OUT SMOOTH FORMULAS ON MOST OF THE POINTS WHICH SEPARATE THEM, INCLUDING TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE. HOWEVER, THE STICKING POINT IS LIABLY TO BE THE DMC'S INSISTENCE ON ELECTORAL REFORM AND NEW ELECTIONS IN TWO YEARS. GOELL GOES ON TO CONCLUDE THAT IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT A NEW COALITION WILL BE FORMED BEFORE THE HISTADUR ELECTIONS JUNE 21. IF LABOR IS UNABLE TO RECOUP FROM ITS LOSSES IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION WITH A VICTORY IN THE HISTADRUT, THERE MAY BE NEW IMPETUS TO A LIKUD-CM COMPROMISE IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT COALITION.

7. GOELL ALSO ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF WHY MOST POLLSTERS WERE SO WRONG. IT WOULD APPEAR, HE SAYS, THAT MOST OF THE LARGE UNDECIDED VOTE WENT HEAVILY

AGAINST THE ALIGNMENT. IN ADDITION, IT IS LIKELY THAT MANY PEOPLE DELIBERATELY MISLED THE POLL QUESTIONERS, PERHAPS FROM AN INNATE FEAR OF ADMITTING, EVEN TO THEMSELVES, THAT THEY WERE GOING TO VOTE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.

8. SEARCHING THROUGH A NUMBER OF VARIOUS COALITION POSSIBILITIES AND FINDING REASONS THAT MAY PREVENT ALL OF THEM FROM BECOMING REAL, DAVAR'S DANIEL BLOCH COMES UP WITH THE THEORETICAL POSSIBILITY
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THAT THE ALIGNMENT AND THE DMC COULD FORM A UNITED PARLIAMENTARY BLOC, POSSIBLY WITH THE INDEPENDENT LIBERALS AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. IN COMBINATION, THESE WOULD FORMALLY BE THE BIGGEST KNESSET FACTION, WHOSE REPRESENTATIVE MIGHT BE APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT. (COMMENT: A MINORITY GOVERNMENT.) IT IS STILL CONCEIVABLE THAT BEGIN MAY NOT SUCCEED IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT, IN VIEW OF DEMANDS BY SHLOM ZION (SHARON FOR DEFENSE MINISTER) AND AGUDAT ISRAEL (RELIGIOUS LEGISLATION) AND STILL CONCEIVABLE THAT NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE NEEDED. ILLOGICAL AS THIS MAY SEEM, IF THE HISTADRUT ELECTIONS SHOW A REVERSE TREND FROM THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, THE ILLOGICAL COULD BECOME REASONABLE, ACCORDING TO BLOCH.

9. MOSHE KOHN IN THE JERUSALEM POST RESORTS TO SARCASM TOWARDS SOME WELL-KNOWN ISRAELI SOCIAL DEMOCRATS FOR THEIR HYSTERICAL ANTI-DEMOCRATIC REACTION TO THE ELECTION OUTCOME. THESE PEOPLE KNOW THAT IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF DAYS BEFORE MENAHEM BEGIN LEADS THE NATION INTO WAR, SENDS OUT THE POLICE TO CRACK ALL PROLETARIAN SKULLS, PROHIBITS STRIKES AND WITH THE HELP OF HIS CLERICAL-FASCIST PARTNERS OF THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES, TURNS ALL SCHOOLS INTO YESHIVOT, SENDS WOMEN BACK TO THE KITCHEN, AND MAKES MIKVE-GOING COMPULSORY.) IF THERE IS ANOTHER WAR, SAYS KOHN, IT WILL NO MORE BE BEGIN'S FAULT THAN ALL THE PREVIOUS WARS WERE THE FAULT OF LABOR GOVERNMENTS; NOR WILL IT BE BECAUSE OF ANY PARTICULAR ISRAELI'S POSITION ON TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE; BUT IT WILL BE BECAUSE ISRAEL'S ENEMIES ARE NOT READY TO ACCEPT THE FACT OF ISRAEL'S SOVEREIGN EXISTENCE.
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